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REGENTS REVIEW NEW ALTERNATIVE TEACHER CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS

BATON ROUGE – The Louisiana Board of Regents for higher education today (Jan. 17) released the results of a comprehensive external review of alternative teacher certification programs proposed by Louisiana's 19 public and private colleges and universities.

The Board of Regents and the Department of Education working collaboratively initiated this first phase review as part of the recommendations made by the Blue Ribbon Commission on Teacher Quality.

The programs reviewed permit individuals to enter the teaching profession through three alternative pathways – a master's degree, the Practitioner Teacher Program for people already teaching and taking courses toward certification, and a non-degree certification program for people working in other fields but taking courses toward eventual certification.

All programs discussed in this document were developed for individuals who want to teach and already have bachelors' degrees in fields other than education. Prior to entry into the three certification programs, these individuals must be capable of passing the reading, writing, mathematics and specialty content PRAXIS examinations, the same assessment required for state certification of teachers in traditional teacher education programs.

"We are pleased that campuses are receiving recommendations to strengthen their programs as a result of this critical analysis," said Commissioner of Higher Education E. Joseph Savoie. With today's teacher shortage it is imperative that we have strong alternative certification programs in place throughout the state that provide solid preparation for future teachers and provide students with well prepared educators."

Universities submitted their newly redesigned alternative certification programs for review in November. A two-staged review process was used by external evaluators to assess written proposals and to conduct face-to-face interviews with key university administrators and faculty.

"The external evaluators were looking to ensure that all alternative certification programs in the state will be high quality programs," Savoie said. "Their recommendations enable campuses to address areas in need of reexamination in order to meet quality expectations as well as new state certification requirements. Based on what I have reviewed, I feel certain that when this process is complete we will only be approving new programs that are appropriate and sound."

Universities will respond to their individual management boards regarding the initial program recommendations. Campuses will then seek system board approval for their new

programs before seeking Board of Regents approval and Department of Education certification.

Reviewers' recommendations ranged from strengthening grade and subject teaching strategies to increasing field-based experiences and performance-based assessments.

While evaluators made recommendations regarding individual campus proposals in the master's degree program and the Practitioner Teacher Program, they did not make individual recommendations in the non-degree certification program. Evaluators suggested that the state instead reexamine the entire structure of that alternative certification track.

The full report on alternative certification programs is available on the Regent's website under "Teacher Education Initiatives" at www.regents.state.la.us.

The next major step in the teacher preparation redesign effort takes place this spring when all undergraduate teacher education programs will be evaluated by the Board of Regents.